

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in a dark green color, framing the central text.

GUZ 53

2Thessalonians

*Bible Commentary:
David Guzik TEV - LIII*

David Guzik

David Guziks' Commentary On
53 2Thessalonians
Biblical Text – TEV (Good News Bible)

Greeting

2Th 1:1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2Th 1:2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving

2Th 1:3 Brothers, we are bound to give thanks to God always concerning you, even as it is right, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of each one of you multiplies toward one another,

2Th 1:4 so as for us to boast ourselves in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions, and the afflictions which you endure,

The Judgment at Christ's Coming

2Th 1:5 a clear token of the just judgment of God, for you to be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you indeed suffer;

2Th 1:6 since it is a just thing with God to pay back tribulation to the ones troubling you,

2Th 1:7 and to give you, those being troubled, relief with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from Heaven with angels of His power,

2Th 1:8 in flaming fire giving full vengeance to those not knowing God, and to those not obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, Isa. 66:15; Jer. 10:25

2Th 1:9 who will pay the penalty: everlasting destruction from the face of the Lord, "and from the glory of His

strength," Isa. 2:20

2Th 1:10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all those who believe in that Day, because our testimony to you was believed.

2Th 1:11 For which we also continually pray concerning you, that our God would count you worthy of the calling, and would fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness, and work of faith in power,

2Th 1:12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

2 Thessalonians 1 - The Godly Character of a Persecuted Church

A. Encouragement for persecuted Christians.

1. (1-2) *A greeting from Paul and his associates.*

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

a. **Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy:** Paul traveled with these men and together they contributed to this letter. Though the name **Paul** is listed first, both **Silvanus** and **Timothy** were his trusted companions.

i. **Silvanus** (also known as *Silas*) was a long and experienced companion of Paul. He traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey and was imprisoned and set free with Paul in the Philippian jail (Act 16:19-27). When Paul first came to Thessalonica, Silas came with him (Act 17:1-9), so the Thessalonians knew **Silvanus** well. He also

collaborated with Paul on the first letter to the Thessalonians (1Th 1:1).

ii. **Timothy** was a resident of Lystra, a city in the province of Galatia (Act 16:1-3). He was the son of a Greek father (Act 16:1), and a Jewish mother named Eunice (2Ti 1:5). From his youth, he had been taught in the Scriptures by his mother and grandmother (2Ti 1:5; 2Ti 3:15). Timothy was a trusted companion and associate of Paul, and he accompanied Paul on many of his missionary journeys. Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonians on a previous occasion (1Th 3:2). With Silvanus, Timothy was also a collaborator on Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians (1Th 1:1).

b. **To the church of the Thessalonians:** Paul himself founded the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Act 17:1-9). He was only in the city a short time because he was forced out by enemies of the Gospel. But **the church of the Thessalonians** left behind was alive and active. Paul's deep concern for this young church, which he had to suddenly leave, prompted this letter – following after the letter of 1 Thessalonians.

c. **Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:** Paul brought his customary greeting to the Thessalonian Christians, hailing them in the **grace** and **peace** of God the Father.

i. Morris cites Bicknell: "The Greek makes it plain that the Father and Christ are one source. It is remarkable that even at this early date the Son is placed side by side with the Father as the fount of divine grace, without any need of comment."

2. (3-4) *Paul's thanks and boasting about the Thessalonians.*

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,

a. **We are bound to thank God always for you:** For Paul, the giving of thanks for God's great work was an *obligation* - he was **bound** to do so, and it was **fitting**, because of the work God did in the Thessalonian Christians.

i. Paul's wording here is strong. "Paul has already written a very warm letter, containing some passages of high praise for the Thessalonian church. It is probable that in the subsequent communications that they had had with him (whether by letter, or by word of mouth) that had said that they were not worthy of such praise. Paul strongly maintains that his words had not been too strong." (Morris)

ii. "It is your duty to praise him. You are bound by the bonds of his love as long as you live to bless his name. It is meet and comely that you should do so. It is not only a pleasurable exercise, but it is the absolute duty of the Christian life to praise God." (Spurgeon)

b. **Because your faith grows exceedingly:** Paul thanked God because the Thessalonians had:

- **Exceedingly** growing **faith**.
- Abounding **love**.
- **Patience and faith in all... persecutions and tribulations**.

i. This **faith** and **love**, thriving in the midst of **persecutions and tribulations**, made Paul **boast** of

the Thessalonians to other churches.

ii. "His verb for 'groweth exceedingly' is an unusual one (here only in the Greek Bible), and gives the thought of a very vigorous growth." (Morris)

iii. Spurgeon explained how to get a strong and growing faith: "By that means you are to grow. This is so with faith. Do all you can, and then do a little more; and when you can do that, then do a little more than you can. Always have something in hand that is greater than your present capacity. Grow up to it, and when you have grown up to it, grow more."

c. **So that we ourselves:** This "is a very emphatic expression, much more emphatic than we would have expected in such a connection. It implies a strong contrast." (Morris) The idea is that though it was unusual for someone who planted a church to glory in its success and health, Paul was so impressed by what God was doing among the Thessalonians even Paul took the liberty to glory in that work.

i. "By these words Paul shows us that we are under an obligation to give thanks to God not only when He does us a kindness, but also when we consider the kindness which He has shown towards our brethren." (Calvin)

B. The persecuted Thessalonians and their persecutors.

1. (5-7) *The persecution and tribulation of the Thessalonians set the righteousness of God on display.*

Which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to *give* you who are

troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

a. **Which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God:** God's **righteous judgment** was at work among the Thessalonians, beginning at the house of God (1Pe 4:17), and purifying them as followers of Jesus. The good result - showing them **worthy of the kingdom of God** - was **manifest evidence** that God was good in allowing them to suffer the *persecutions and tribulations* described in 2Th 1:4.

i. We usually think that God is *absent* when we suffer, and that our suffering calls God's righteous judgment into question. Paul took the exact opposite position and insisted that the Thessalonians' suffering was **evidence of the righteous judgment of God**. Where suffering is coupled with righteous endurance, God's work is done. The fires of persecution and tribulation were like the purifying fires of a refiner, burning away the dross from the gold, bringing forth a pure, precious metal.

ii. The idea behind **counted worthy** is not "seen as worthy" but "reckoned as worthy" as in a judicial decree. Paul's prayer was that the worthiness of Jesus may be accounted to the Thessalonian Christians.

b. **Since it is a righteous thing with God:** Many people question the righteousness of God's judgment. They believe that God's love and His judgment contradict each other. But God's judgment is based on the great spiritual principle that it is a **righteous thing with God to repay** those who do evil. Since God is **righteous**, He will **repay all evil**, and it will all be judged and accounted for either at the cross or in hell.

i. The judgment of God means that there is nothing unimportant in my life. Everything is under the eye of

the God I must answer to.

ii. "A world in which justice was not done at last would not be God's world at all." (Hiebert)

c. To repay with tribulation those who trouble you:

God was also shown as **righteous** when those who persecuted the Thessalonians were repaid with **tribulation** according to their evil works. They probably believed they did God a favor when they persecuted the Christians, but the **righteous** God would **repay** them and not *reward* them.

i. "Often retribution is pictured as overtaking men in the world to come, but there are not wanting passages which indicated that it may operate in the here and now (e.g., Rom 1:24; Rom 1:26; Rom 1:28)." (Morris)

ii. We can see a statement like 2Th 1:6 in much the same context as those passages in the Psalms where the writer happily wishes ill upon his enemies – they are a prayer of entrusting the judgment of these enemies to *God*, instead of personally taking the initiative.

iii. The **tribulation** upon these persecutors of God's people is not like a purifying fire. It is like the fire of a pure and holy judgment.

d. And to give you who are troubled rest: The Thessalonian Christians were persecuted and had tribulation; and God used it for His glory. But the time of persecution would not last. A day of **rest** is promised for every believer.

2. (8-10) The coming day of judgment for both the persecuted and their persecutors.

In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel

of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

a. **In flaming fire taking vengeance:** This is what the day of judgment will be like for those who persecuted the Thessalonians. For the persecutors, *those who do not know God*, and **those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus**, that will be a day of **vengeance** and **everlasting destruction**.

i. **In flaming fire:** It isn't the fire that makes hell what it is. In the fiery furnace, the three Jewish young men were completely comfortable, as long as the Lord was with them in the fire (Daniel 3). What truly characterizes hell is that there, people are **from the presence of the Lord**, in the sense of being apart from anything *good* or *blessed* in God's presence. **From the presence of the Lord** sums up the Bible's understanding of hell. Nothing must be said more about its horrors, other than hell will be completely devoid of God and every aspect of His character, except one: His unrelenting holy justice.

ii. It is not wrong for God to take **vengeance**; we understand this when we understand what the word means in the ancient Greek language. "The word rendered 'vengeance' has no associations of vindictiveness. It is a compound based on the same root as the word rendered 'righteous' in vv. 5, 6, and it has the idea of a firm administration of unwavering justice." (Morris) The idea is the application of *full justice* on the offender; nothing more and nothing less.

iii. **Everlasting destruction:** We must not be moved from the idea that the punishment of the wicked is **everlasting**. As the blessings of heaven are eternal, the penalty of hell is also eternal. "The perpetual duration of this death is proved from the fact that its opposite is the glory of Christ. This is eternal and has no end." (Calvin)

b. **To be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe:** For the persecuted **saints**, those **who believe**, they will have God **glorified in** them on that **Day**, and they will see and admire Jesus more than ever.

i. "To raise up such a number of poor, sinful, despicable worms out of the dust into such a sublime state of glory and dignity, will be admirable." (Poole)

ii. We will admire what God has done in others and in us. "Those who look upon the saints will feel a sudden wonderment of sacred delight; they will be startled with the surprising glory of the Lord's work in them; 'We thought He would do great things, but this! This surpasseth conception!' Every saint will be a wonder to himself. 'I thought my bliss would be great, but not like this!' All his brethren will be a wonder to the perfected believer. He will say, 'I thought the saints would be perfect, but I never imagined such a transfiguration of excessive glory would be put upon each of them. I could not have imagined my Lord to be so good and gracious.'" (Spurgeon)

c. **Because our testimony among you was believed:** This shows the difference between one destined for judgment and one destined for glory. The difference is belief in the message Paul preached (**our testimony**), the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ.

i. Paul knew what it was like to be transformed from a persecutor to the persecuted. He believed the **testimony** of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and it changed his life.

3. (11-12) Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians.

Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of *His* goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

a. **Therefore we also pray always:** Since the Thessalonian Christians were in the midst of persecution and tribulation, they needed prayer. Here, Paul assured them that he and his associates **pray always** for them.

b. **That our God would count you worthy of this calling:** God gives Christians a high **calling**, mentioned in the previous sentence. The **calling** is to see Him glorified in us at His coming. Paul rightly prays that the Thessalonians may be counted **worthy of this calling**, and he shows ways to fulfill this calling.

i. We live worthy of His call when we **fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness**, living lives *touched* by **His goodness**, and *displaying His goodness*.

ii. We live worthy of His call when we **fulfill ... the work of faith with power**, believing on Jesus and seeing His work done all around us by faith.

iii. We live worthy of His call when **the name of our Lord Jesus Christ** is **glorified in** us. We understand that this means more than the **name of our Lord**

Jesus as a word, but also as a representation of His character.

iv. We live worthy of His call when we are glorified **in Him**, when He alone is our source of glory and exaltation, and who we are in Jesus is more important than who we are in anything else.

c. **According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ:** This great work of living worthy of His calling can only happen **according to the grace of God**. It happens by His power, favor, and acceptance in work in us, moving along our will and cooperation.

The Man of Lawlessness

2Th 2:1 And, brothers, we entreat you, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of our gathering together to Him,
2Th 2:2 for you not to be quickly shaken in the mind, nor to be disturbed, neither through a spirit, nor through speech, nor through letter, as through us, as if the Day of Christ has come.

2Th 2:3 Do not let anyone deceive you in any way, because that Day will not come unless first comes the falling away, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

2Th 2:4 the one opposing and exalting himself over everything being called God, or object of worship, so as for him "to sit in the temple of God" as God, proclaiming that he himself is God. Dan. 11:36; Eze. 28:2

2Th 2:5 Do you not remember that I told you these things, I yet being with you?

2Th 2:6 And now you know the thing holding back, for him to be revealed in his time.

2Th 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness already is working, only he is holding back now, until it comes out of the midst.

2Th 2:8 And then "the Lawless One" will be revealed, "whom" "the Lord" "will consume" "by the spirit of His

mouth," and He will bring to nought by the brightness of His presence. Isa. 11:4

2Th 2:9 His coming is according to the working of Satan in all power and miracles and lying wonders,

2Th 2:10 and in all deceit of unrighteousness in those being lost, because they did not receive the love of the truth in order for them to be saved.

2Th 2:11 And because of this, God will send to them a working of error, for them to believe the lie,

2Th 2:12 that all may be judged, those not believing the truth, but who have delighted in unrighteousness.

Stand Firm

2Th 2:13 But we ought to thank God always concerning you, brothers, beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,

2Th 2:14 to which He called you through our gospel, to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2Th 2:15 So, then, brothers, stand firm and strongly hold the teachings you were taught, whether by word or by our letter.

2Th 2:16 But may our Lord Himself, Jesus Christ, and our God and Father, He who loves and gives us everlasting encouragement and good hope by grace,

2Th 2:17 encourage your hearts, and may He establish you in every good word and work.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

2 Thessalonians 2 - The Coming of That Day

A. Instruction regarding the coming of Jesus.

1. (1-2) Paul's comfort to the troubled Thessalonians and their question.

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

a. Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him: Paul here addressed questions raised by his first letter, where he instructed the Thessalonians about the catching away of the church to be with Jesus (1Th 4:16-18).

i. The challenge in understanding this chapter comes from the fact that it is a *supplement* to what Paul has already taught the Thessalonians in words, and we don't know exactly what Paul said to them. Yet the ideas are clear enough if carefully pieced together.

b. Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him: Paul clearly wrote of the return of Jesus, but the wording here implies a difference between **the coming** and **our gathering**. This strongly suggests that there are essentially two comings of Jesus. One coming is *for* His church (as described clearly in 1Th 4:16-18), and the other coming is *with* His church, to judge a rebellious world.

i. "They are two parts of one great event." (Morris)

ii. Hiebert shows how the grammar of the ancient Greek in 2Th 2:1 shows this: "The government of the two nouns under one article makes it clear that one event, viewed under two complimentary aspects, is thought of."

iii. This is completely consistent with other passages of Scripture that indicate that there must be two aspects

of Jesus' second coming, and the aspects must be separated by some appreciable period of time.

- Different world conditions are described (Mat 24:37-42, Mat 24:21, Rev 6:15-16).
- Different manners of Jesus' return are described (1Th 4:16-17, Rev 19:11; Rev 19:14-15; Rev 19:21).
- Different scenarios regarding the predictability of the date of Jesus' return are established (Mat 24:36, Dan 12:11).

c. **We ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled:** Apparently, a misunderstanding of Paul's teaching (or an incorrect application of it) had caused the Thessalonians to be **shaken in mind** and **troubled**. Here Paul used a strong wording, speaking of both a *sudden jolt* (**shaken in mind**) and a continuing state of upset (**troubled**). Their fears centered on the idea that **the day of Christ had** [already] **come**.

i. "The word *to be shaken*, signifies to be agitated as a ship at sea in a storm, and strongly marks the confusion and distress which the Thessalonians had felt in their false apprehension of this coming of Christ." (Clarke)

ii. A preferred manuscript reading of 2Th 2:2 has *the day of the Lord* rather than **the day of Christ**. The *day of the Lord* is a concept with a rich Old Testament background, and was mentioned in Paul's previous letter to the Thessalonians (1Th 5:2). It is not a single day, but a period associated with God's outpouring of judgment and the deliverance of God's people. A significant aspect of the *day of the Lord* is the Great Tribulation described in Mat 24:1-31.

d. **As though the day of Christ had come:** Some translations have *that the day of Christ is at hand*, such as the King James Version. But the translation in the New King James Version (and other modern translations) is preferred. The Thessalonians were not afraid that the **day of Christ** was *coming*, but that they were *in it*.

i. "The verb does not really mean *to be at hand*, but rather *to be present*." (Morris) The notable Greek commentator Dean Alford translates the passage, "**To the effect that the day of the Lord is present;** not, '*is at hand*': the verb used here occurs six times in the New Testament, and always in the sense of *being present*; in two of those places, Rom 8:38, 1Co 3:22, *the things present* are distinguished expressly from *the things to come*."

ii. From this, it is obvious that the **day of Christ** had not been *completed*. Paul will go on to demonstrate that it also had not yet *dawned*, because the Thessalonians were afraid that they were in the Great Tribulation (the *day of the Lord*), and feared that they had missed the rapture. But Paul will demonstrate that they are not in the **day of Christ**; because if they were, then certain signs would be present.

iii. It is important to notice that the Thessalonians would be **shaken** or **troubled** by the thought of being in the Great Tribulation *only* if they had been taught by Paul that they would *escape* that period through the rapture. Otherwise they would, in a sense, *welcome* the Great Tribulation as a necessary prelude to the Second Coming. But Paul had clearly taught them that they would escape God's judgment on this earth during the period known as the *day of the Lord* or the **day of Christ** (1Th 4:14-18).

e. **Either by spirit or by word or by letter:** Perhaps the troubling word had come through a misguided prophecy (**spirit or by word**). Or perhaps some other leader wrote the Thessalonians a **letter** teaching that they were already in the **day of Christ**. Either way, they were upset at the idea that they had somehow missed the rapture.

i. "The teaching of the Apostles was, and of the Holy Spirit in all ages has been, that the day of the Lord *is at hand*. But these Thessalonians imagined it to be already come." (Alford)

2. (3) *Signs marking the coming day.*

Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,*

a. **For that Day will not come:** Paul will not describe events which must *precede* the rapture, but events that are *concrete evidence* of the Great Tribulation - **the day of Christ**. In this sense, one cannot be *certain* the **day of Christ** (the Great Tribulation) has come unless these signs are present.

i. This phrase is not in the original text, but is very appropriately added. Alford says of the phrase, **for that day will not come**: "So A.V. supplies, rightly. There does not seem to have been any intention on the part of the Apostle to fill up the ellipsis: it supplies itself in the reader's mind."

b. **Unless the falling away comes first:** The ancient Greek wording for **falling away** indicates a *rebellion* or a *departure*. Bible scholars debate if it refers to an apostasy among those who once followed God, or a general worldwide rebellion. In fact, Paul may have both in mind, because there is evidence of each in the end

times (1Ti 4:1-3, 2Ti 3:1-5; 2Ti 4:3-4). Nevertheless, Paul's point is clear: "You are worried that we are in the Great Tribulation and that you missed the rapture. But you can know that we are *not* in the Great Tribulation, because we have not yet seen **the falling away** that **comes first**."

i. **The falling away:** The article "**the**" makes it even more significant. This is not a **falling away**, but **the falling away**, the great and final rebellion.

ii. Some have suggested that the idea behind **falling away** is really a *departure*, in the sense of the rapture of the church. But a *departure* implies that the one leaving does so of his own accord and initiative, and this is not the case with the catching away of the church. In addition, the ancient Greek word in the New Testament (Act 21:21, *forsake*) or in the Septuagint, always implies something sinful and negative.

iii. The idea of a great end-times apostasy also does not contradict the idea of a great end-times revival. Some Christians doubt the idea of great revival in the last days, or even welcome apostasy believing it signals the end. But just as the Book of Revelation describes great rejection of Jesus during the Great Tribulation (Rev 9:20-21; Rev 17:2-6) *and* great acceptance of Him (Rev 7:9-14), the two can stand side-by-side.

c. **And the man of sin is revealed:** Before the Great Tribulation can be identified with certainty, a particular person – known as **the man of sin**, – must be **revealed**. Paul's point is clear: "You are worried that we are in the Great Tribulation and that you missed the rapture. But you can know that we are *not* in the Great

Tribulation, because we have not yet seen **the man of sin ... revealed.**"

i. The most traditional understanding of this **man of sin** is to say that he is not an individual, but a system or an office. Historically, Protestant interpreters have seen the **man of sin** to be the succession of popes. Calvin thought this way: "Paul, however, is not speaking of one individual, but of a kingdom that was to be seized by Satan for the purpose of setting up a seat of abomination in the midst of God's temple. This we see accomplished in popery."

ii. However, there is *no* good reason to see this **man of sin** to be other than what the plainest meaning is here – an individual who will come to great prominence in the very last days. This was how it was understood in the earliest days of Christianity. "The *fathers* understood the *Antichrist* to be intended, but of this person they seemed to have formed no specific idea." (Clarke)

- Daniel described an individual person: *The prince who is to come* (Dan 9:26), the *king of fierce countenance* (Dan 8:23), the *willful king* (Dan 11:36-45).

- Jesus described an individual person: The one who comes *in his own name* (Joh 5:43).

- We are not surprised that Paul described this **man of sin** as an individual person, *not* as a system or an office.

iii. This **man of sin** is a prominent figure in the Bible, and the ultimate personification of the *spirit of the Antichrist* spoken of in 1Jn 4:2-3. He will no doubt live many years before the Great Tribulation, but he will only be **revealed** as the **man of sin** during that

period. The idea behind the title **man of sin** is that "Sin has such absolute domination over him that he seems to be the very embodiment of it." (Hiebert)

d. **Son of perdition: Perdition** means *destruction*, the complete loss of well-being. It is really the opposite of *salvation*. To call him the **son of** perdition means his character is marked by this destruction. Moffatt says the phrase "

son of perdition" essentially means *the doomed one*.

3. (4) *What the man of sin does.*

Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

a. **Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or is worshipped:** The *man of sin* demands worship for himself that belongs to God only (Luk 4:8). This demand for worship is also described in Rev 13:1-6.

i. "He *stands against* and *exalts* himself *above* all Divine authority, and above every *object of adoration*, and every *institution* relative to Divine worship." (Clarke)

ii. Understanding the strength and breadth of this statement shows us that saying that the Antichrist is the Pope is far too simplistic. He will sponsor a religion that does not tolerate the worship of anyone or anything except himself. The apostate Roman Catholic Church may be part of this end-times religion, but it will not encompass it.

iii. "Notice, that the meaning of these words cannot by any probability be fulfilled by any one who, as the Pope, creates objects of worship, and thus (by inference merely) makes himself greater than the objects which he creates: but it is required that this

Antichrist should *set HIMSELF up as an object of worship*, above, and as superior to, 'everyone that is called God or worshipped.'" (Alford)

b. **So that he sits as God in the temple of God:** The man of sin's demand for worship will be so extreme, he will set himself up as God in the temple at Jerusalem, demanding this blasphemous worship from everyone (Rev 13:14-15 and Mat 24:15; Mat 24:21; Mat 24:29-31).

i. **The temple of God:** That this is a literal temple is clear from the text, and has been understood as such by even the earliest Christians. "But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom." (Irenaeus, writing in the late second century)

ii. The literal understanding of Paul's words is also supported by the fact that when he wrote this letter, something similar to this *almost* happened in the recent past. "The recent attempt of Caligula to erect a statue of himself in the Temple at Jerusalem may have furnished a trait for Paul's delineation of the future Deceiver; the fearful impiety of this outburst had sent a profound shock through Judaism, which would be felt by Jewish Christians as well." (Moffatt)

c. **He sits as God in the temple:** The specific ancient Greek word for **temple** indicates *the most holy place* and not the temple as a whole. "It is not that he enters the temple precincts: he invades the most sacred place and there takes his seat. His action is itself a claim to deity."

(Morris) This is the ultimate blasphemy that results in certain judgment, the *abomination of desolation* spoken of by both Daniel and Jesus.

i. The prophet Daniel told us the Antichrist will break his covenant with the Jews and bring sacrifice and offerings to an end; that the Antichrist will defile the temple by setting something abominable there (Dan 9:27; Dan 11:31; Dan 12:11).

ii. Jesus said to look for an abomination standing in the holy place, which would be the pivotal sign that the season of God's wrath was upon the earth (Mat 24:15-16; Mat 24:21).

iii. "Any man may be satisfied that St. Paul alluded to Daniel's description, because he has not only borrowed the same ideas, but has even adopted some of the phrases and expressions." (Clarke)

d. **Showing himself that he is God:** The man of sin is truly an *Anti*-Christ. Satan has planned the career of the man of sin to mirror the ministry of Jesus.

- Both Jesus and the man of sin have a coming (2Th 2:1; 2Th 2:9).

- Both Jesus and the man of sin are revealed (2Th 1:7; 2Th 2:3).

- Both Jesus and the man of sin have a gospel (2Th 2:10-11).

- Both Jesus and the man of sin say that they alone should be worshipped (2Th 2:4).

- Both Jesus and the man of sin have support for their claims by miraculous works (2Th 2:9).

i. Clearly, the man of sin is Satan's parody of the true Messiah. Yet in the end, the *man of sin* can only show **himself that he is God**. The coming of Jesus and the

judgment of God will make it clear that the man of sin is not God at all.

4. (5-8) *What restrains the coming of this man of sin.*

Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

a. **When I was still with you I told you these things:** Paul was only with the Thessalonians a few weeks (Act 17:1-10). But Paul thought it important to teach these brand new Christians about Biblical prophecy, and he taught them in some detail.

b. **And now you know what is restraining:** For now, Satan and the *man of sin* are being restrained. The principle of their working is now present (**the mystery of lawlessness is already at work**). But at the right time, the Holy Spirit (**He who restrains**) who restrains their full revelation will be **taken out of the way**.

c. **Taken out of the way:** We should not think that the Holy Spirit would *leave* the earth during the Great Tribulation. He will be present on the earth during the Great Tribulation because many are saved, sealed, and serve God during this period (Rev 7:3-14; Rev 14:1-5), and this can't happen without the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is **taken out of the way**, not removed.

i. "The phrase is used of any person or thing which is taken out of the way, whether by death or other

removal.” (Alford)

ii. Some see this as the end of a dispensation: “The special presence of the Spirit as the indweller of saints will terminate abruptly at the *parousia* as it began abruptly at Pentecost. Once the body of Christ has been caught away to heaven, the Spirit’s ministry will revert back to what he did for believers during the Old Testament period.” (Thomas)

d. The mystery of lawlessness is already at work:

This great principle of evil is already present in the world. It will be ultimately unveiled in the man of sin, but he does not introduce a *new* wickedness into the world, only an intensity of prior wickedness.

i. Right now, this **lawlessness** is a **mystery** – that it is, it can only be seen and understood by revelation. Otherwise it is hidden. “It is not open sin and wickedness, but dissembled piety, specious errors, wickedness under a form of godliness cunningly managed, that is here meant.” (Poole)

e. And then the lawless one will be revealed: Paul states two certain facts about the man of sin, here called **the lawless one**. First, it is certain that the **lawless one will be revealed** when the Holy Spirit removes His restraint. Second, it is certain that the **lawless one** will be destroyed by the mere **brightness** of Jesus at **His coming**.

i. Paul probably has Isa 11:4 in mind: *He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked*. The Isaiah passage refers to the LORD – to Yahweh – but Paul freely used it of Jesus, recognizing that Jesus is Yahweh.

- ii. Whoever the *man of sin* is, he has not had his career yet. We know this because at the end of his career, the *man of sin* is destroyed by Jesus Christ Himself.

5. (9-12) *The character and strategy of the man of sin.*

The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

a. **The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan:** The Antichrist will come with **power**, with **signs** and with **lying wonders**. But all of this **is according to the working of Satan**, as described in Rev 13:13-17.

- i. If someone has spiritual **power**, **signs**, or **wonders**, those are not enough to prove they are from God. Satan can perform his own powerful works, either through deception or through his own resources of power.

- ii. "He is Satan's messiah, an infernal caricature of the true messiah." (Moffatt)

b. **Among those who perish:** However, the deception can only take root in those who **do not receive the love of the truth**. These people are ready for the deception of the Antichrist, because they *want* a lie, and **God will send them a strong delusion**.

- i. **God will send them:** In the end, the Antichrist is only God's messenger. God has judgment to bring,

and He will **send ... a strong delusion** through the Antichrist. God will not *force* this **delusion** on anyone, but those who **do not receive the love of the truth** will receive this **strong delusion**.

ii. Alford translates: *God is sending to them the working of delusion in order that they should believe the falsehood.*

iii. "They were first deluded, which was their sin; and God sends them strong delusion, and that is their punishment." (Poole)

c. **That they should believe the lie:** Specifically, God sends them **the lie**. This isn't just *any lie*, but **the lie**, the lie that has enthralled the human race since Adam. This is **the lie** that God is not God, and that we are or can be gods.

i. "His point is that the last pseudo-Messiah or anti-Christ will embody all that is profane and blasphemous, every conceivable element of impiety; and that, instead of being repudiated, he will be welcome by Jews as well as pagans." (Moffatt)

d. **That they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness:** As God gives rebellious man the lie he desires, it isn't out of His generosity. Instead, it shows God's judgment on those who reject the truth. As Romans 1 points out, in judgment God may give a man up to the depravity of his heart, to his

pleasure in unrighteousness.

i. "They think that they are acting in defiance of Him. But in the end they find that those very acts in which they expressed their defiance were the vehicle of their punishment." (Morris)

B. Encouragement for last days believers.

1. (13-14) *Paul gives thanks for God's work in the Thessalonians*

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

a. **But we are bound to give thanks:** Paul repeats his idea from 2Th 1:3, that he was obligated to thank God for His work in the Thessalonians, in light of the greatness of that work.

b. **Brethren beloved by the Lord:** Paul is first thankful that they are **beloved by the Lord**. God's love for us is the primary motivation for all His work in and through us.

c. **Because God from the beginning chose you for salvation:** Paul also praised the sovereign choice of God in bringing the Thessalonians to salvation. God's choice was **from the beginning**. Before they chose God, He **chose** them, and He **chose** them for **salvation through sanctification**.

i. "From the beginning! Who shall compute the contents of the vast unknown abyss, which is comprehended in that phrase? The beginning of creation was preceded by the anticipation of Redemption, and the love of God to all who were one with Christ." (Meyer)

ii. **Salvation through sanctification:** The two go together. Those who claim to be chosen but lack evidence of **sanctification** (separation *from* the world and *unto* God) are on shaky ground. We can't

see if a person is *chosen*, but we can see if they are *sanctified*.

iii. "Had it been possible for you to have had salvation without sanctification, it would have been a curse to you instead of a blessing. If such a thing were possible, I cannot conceive of a more lamentable condition than for a man to, have the happiness of salvation without the holiness of it; happily, it is not possible. If you could be saved from the consequences of sin, but not from the sin itself, and its power and pollution, it would be no blessing to you." (Spurgeon)

d. **By the Spirit and belief in the truth:** God's work of sanctification uses two great forces, the **Spirit** and the **belief in the truth**. The Spirit of God and the Word of God are *essential* to our **sanctification**.

e. **To which He called you by our gospel:** The call for this salvation comes through the **gospel**, the Gospel Paul preached (*we preach Christ crucified, 1Co 1:23*), and the Gospel that will enable us to obtain the glory of Jesus.

f. **For the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ:** This is the same glory John wrote of in 1Jn 3:2 - *we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*.

2. (15) *An exhortation to stand fast.*

Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

a. **Therefore, brethren, stand fast:** **Therefore** means that Paul wants us to consider what he has written up to this point. In this letter, he has given compelling reasons why Christians must **stand fast** and not be moved.

- **Stand fast** because the current distress (the *persecutions and tribulations* described in 2Th 1:4).
- **Stand fast** because of the coming judgment of this world (*in flaming fire taking vengeance*, 2Th 1:8).
- **Stand fast** because of the strength of coming deception (*all power, signs, and lying wonders*, 2Th 2:9).
- **Stand fast** because of our glorious destiny (*the glory of our Lord Jesus*, 2Th 2:14).

b. **Stand fast and hold the traditions:** The command to **stand fast** implies a *location*, and this tells us what Christians must **stand fast** upon. They must keep standing on God's Word, delivered both by the authoritative word of the apostles (**by word**) and the letters of the apostles (**our epistle**).

i. **Traditions:** The Bible recognizes that **traditions** can be a dangerous feature of religious systems (Mat 15:2-3) or the traditions of man (Col 2:8). But Paul has in mind the *apostolic traditions* preserved for us in the record of the New Testament.

ii. "The word *paradoseis*, which we render tradition, signifies anything delivered in the way of teaching; and here most obviously means the doctrines delivered by the apostle to the Thessalonians; whether in his preaching, private conversation, or by these letters." (Clarke)

iii. It is only this anchor of God's Word that can enable us to **stand fast** under the weight of our present tribulation, and the weight of our coming glory.

3. (16-17) *A prayer for the Thessalonians.*

Spurgeon preached five separate sermons on these wonderful verses.

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

a. **Who has loved us:** Before Paul asked God to do something specific for the Thessalonians, he remembered all God *had* done for them. God has **loved** them, and gave them **everlasting consolation** and **good hope by grace**.

i. In our intercession and petition, we do well to remember God's past faithfulness and present blessing. His faithfulness in the past is a promise of His faithfulness for the future.

ii. "*God has given us much*, and all his past gifts are pleas for more gifts. Men do not plead so. The beggar in the street cannot say, 'Give me a penny to-day because you gave me one yesterday,' else we might reply, 'That is the reason why I should not give you any more.' But when dealing with God, this is a good plea." (Spurgeon)

b. **Comfort your hearts and establish you:** Paul asked God to do two things in the Thessalonian Christians. First, he wanted God to **comfort** their **hearts**. Second, he asked God to **establish** them **in every good word and work**. This prayer for *comfort and continued testimony and work for Jesus* is fitting in light of the special needs of believers under pressure.

i. This is a prayer full of useful and important suggestions:

- Jesus is ours.
- God is our Father.
- God has loved us.

- God has given us much.
- We have **everlasting consolation**.
- It is all through grace.

ii. **And establish you:** "I believe in an established Church, not established by acts of Parliament but established by the purpose and by the presence of God in the midst of it." (Spurgeon)

c. **In every good word and work:** There is some textual evidence that Paul originally put the order as *every good work and word*. Though this is a small difference, Charles Spurgeon saw an important distinction in the order.

i. "Some Christian people think that 'word' should be everything and work nothing, but the Scriptures are not of their mind. These professors speak a great deal about what they will do, talk a great deal about what other people ought to do, and a great deal more about what others fail to do; and so they go on with word, word, word, and nothing else but word. They do not get as far as 'work,' but the apostle put work first in this case." (Spurgeon)

Pray for Us

2Th 3:1 For the rest, brothers, pray concerning us, that the Word of the Lord may run and be glorified, even as also it has with you,

2Th 3:2 and that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men. For faith is not in all.

2Th 3:3 But the Lord is faithful who will establish and will guard you from the evil.

2Th 3:4 But we are persuaded in the Lord as to you, that whatever things we have commanded you, you both do and you will do.

2Th 3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

Warning Against Idleness

2Th 3:6 And we charge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to draw yourselves back from every brother walking in a disorderly way, and not according to the teaching which you received from us.

2Th 3:7 For you yourselves know how it is right to act like us, because we were not disorderly among you;

2Th 3:8 nor did we eat bread from anyone as a gift, but by labor and toil, working night and day in order not to burden anyone of you.

2Th 3:9 Not that we do not have authority, but that we give ourselves as an example to you, for you to act like us.

2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, we commanded this to you: If anyone does not desire to work, neither let him eat.

2Th 3:11 For we hear some are walking in a disorderly way among you, not working at all, but being busybodies.

2Th 3:12 And we command such and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that working with quietness, they may eat their own bread.

2Th 3:13 And you, brothers, do not lose heart in well doing.

2Th 3:14 But if anyone does not obey our word through the letter, mark that one, and do not associate with him, that he be shamed.

2Th 3:15 But do not count him an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

Benediction

2Th 3:16 And may the Lord of peace Himself continually give peace to you in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

2Th 3:17 The greeting of Paul by my hand is the sign in every letter; so I write.

2Th 3:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.
Amen.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

2 Thessalonians 3 - Guidance for Church Life

A. Prayer requested and given.

1. (1-2) *Paul's prayer request.*

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified, just as *it is* with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.

a. **Finally, brethren, pray for us:** Paul constantly asked other Christians to pray for him (Rom 15:30, 2Co 1:11, Eph 6:18-19, Php 1:19, Col 4:3, 1Th 5:25, and Phm 1:22). Paul knew that the success of his ministry in some measure depended on the prayers of God's people.

i. "You cannot tell how much God's servants are helped by the prayers of his people. The strongest man in Israel will be the better for the prayers of the weakest saint in Zion." (Spurgeon)

b. **That the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified:** Paul's great concern - what he first asked the Thessalonian Christians to pray for - was that God's Word be **free** to do its work among others, even as it had among the Thessalonians (**just as it is with you**).

i. Paul asked for prayer so that the Word can **run** freely, without any hindrance. Paul's prayer request makes us wonder how often the work of God's Word is hindered by our prayerlessness.

ii. God *has* promised that His Word would be free and perform its work: *It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it* (Isa 55:11). But as with many of God's promises, we are expected to take this promise in faith, and in prayer, to ask God to perform the promise for His glory.

c. **That we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men:** These were those who wanted to hinder the work of the gospel. Paul wanted God to either deliver him from such men, or change them into reasonable and godly men.

2. (3-5) *Paul's confidence in the Lord and prayer for the Thessalonians.*

But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

a. **But the Lord is faithful:** Even if not *all* men *have faith*, the **Lord is faithful**. This was the basis of Paul's confidence in God's ability to **establish** and **guard** us from the **evil one**.

i. God promised to keep Satan on a leash. He will not allow any temptation to become too great for us (1Co 10:13), and will not allow Satan to do whatever he wants with us (Luk 22:31-32).

b. **And we have confidence in the Lord:** Paul was also confident (**in the Lord**) regarding the Thessalonians themselves, that they would follow through and be obedient to God's Word (**that you do and will do the things we command you**). This shows that God's work

of establishing and guarding us is done, in part, through His appeal to our will in obeying His Word.

i. God doesn't just pour spiritual maturity and stability into us. He works it in us through our cooperation with His will.

c. **Now may the Lord direct your hearts:** Towards this end, Paul wisely prayed for both **love** and **patience** (endurance) for the Thessalonian Christians. These were two qualities essential for the kind of spiritual stability and strength the Thessalonians needed.

B. Instructions for the strength and purity of the church.

1. (6) *The command to withdraw from the disorderly.*

But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

a. **But we command you:** The strength of this statement is plain. It was not only a **command**, but it was also made **in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

b. **That you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly:** Paul defined the **disorderly** as those who did not walk **according to the tradition** (the pattern of teaching and living) Paul and the apostles gave to them.

i. Churches should never withdraw from someone because he fails to conform to *man's* traditions or teachings. The only standard to uphold is *apostolic* tradition and teaching.

ii. "The present tense of the verb *walks* denotes that it is a deliberate course of action. Their disorderly

conduct is not an occasional lapse but a persistent practice.” (Hiebert)

c. **Withdraw from every brother:** Paul had already told the Thessalonians to *warn the unruly* (1Th 5:14). Apparently, the problem still remained in some measure, so he told them to now discipline the *unruly* ones in question.

i. The purpose in withdrawing from these disobedient was not so much punishment, but more so simply to deny these disobedient ones the aid and comfort of the fellowship of the body of Christ until they repented. It put them out of the church into the “domain” of Satan (the world), in hope that they might miss the fellowship of the church so much they would repent of their disobedience.

ii. Paul echoed the same idea in 1Co 5:4-5. The purpose was to bring about repentance and salvation in the disobedient ones, not to condemn or damn them.

iii. In an indirect way, Paul showed that his vision for the church was that it should be such a place of love and comfort that one would genuinely feel sad and sorry to be excluded from the church. Churches today should also fit that description.

2. (7-9) *Paul describes the life displayed by the apostolic tradition.*

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

a. **For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us:** Paul was an excellent example among the Thessalonians, in that he worked hard to support his own needs. This wasn't because apostles like Paul didn't have the right to request support. Instead, it was because he wanted to set a good example of hard work and prove false any accusation that he preached the Gospel for personal gain.

b. **To make ourselves an example of how you should follow us:** Therefore, the Thessalonians should follow Paul in his example of both hard work and willingness to sacrifice for the furtherance and integrity of the Gospel.

3. (10) *Paul describes the teaching presented by the apostolic tradition.*

For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

a. **If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat:** Simply put, Paul says that if anyone **will not work** (instead of *can not work*), **neither shall he eat**. God's plan is to provide for our needs through our work.

b. **Neither shall he eat:** Since God is able to provide through our needs in any manner imaginable, it means something that He has chosen (for the most part) to meet our needs through work. This is part of God's character, because He is a busy God and always at work.

4. (11-13) *Paul applies the apostolic tradition to the situation among the Thessalonians.*

For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they

work in quietness and eat their own bread. But *as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.*

a. **There are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner:** The idleness of some had become a source of sin. It was not only because of the work that they *didn't do*, but also because of the harm they *did do* with their idle time (**but are busybodies**).

i. There is a play on words between the ancient Greek phrasing in the lines **not working at all** and **but are busybodies**. The idea is something like "busybodies who do no business."

ii. Perhaps these **busybodies** thought that if Jesus was coming soon, it made no sense to work. It would then be easy for them to intrude into the lives of others and take advantage of Christian generosity.

iii. "It is the inactive drones whom Paul is berating – those who live by the sweat of others while they themselves do nothing for the common good to help the human race, such as our monks and priests who acquire ample dimensions by their inactivity." (Calvin)

b. **Now those who are such we command:** With authority, **through our Lord Jesus**, Paul commanded these **busybodies** to **work**, to get out of the business of others (**in quietness**) and to provide for their own needs (**eat their own bread**) instead of expecting other Christians to provide for them.

i. The early church did provide for the truly needy among them, but only after being certain that they were truly needy and after putting them to work for the church (1Ti 5:3-16).

ii. "Paul forbids the Thessalonians to encourage their laziness by indulging it, and teaches that it is those who proved themselves with the necessities of life by

honourable and useful work that lead a life of holiness." (Calvin)

c. **Do not grow weary in doing good:** This was a proper encouragement for those who were working as they should. Few things are more wearying than seeing others take advantage of Christian generosity. But we should never let the manipulations of some discourage us from doing good to the truly needy.

i. The older King James Version has this, *be not weary in well doing*. There is plenty of *well-wishing* in the world. *Well-resolving*, *well-suggesting*, and *well-criticizing* are also found in plenty. Many people are good at *well-talking*, but there is not enough of simple *well doing*.

ii. "But well doing consists in taking down the shutters and selling your goods; tucking up your shirt sleeves and doing a good day's work; sweeping the carpets and dusting the chairs, if you happen to be a domestic servant. Well doing is attending to the duties that arise out of our relationships in life – attending carefully to them, and seeing that in nothing we are eye-servers and men-pleasers, but in everything are seeking to serve God." (Spurgeon)

iii. There are many excuses one might make to allowing weariness in

doing good, but they should all be rejected.

- "It takes so much effort to keep doing good" – but you will extend effort towards the things of the world.
- "It takes so much self-denial to keep doing good" – but it is worth it when we consider the reward.
- "It just brings me persecution to do good" – but your persecutions are nothing compared to that which others have suffered.

- “People don’t respond and there are little results when I do good” – but remember how slow you were to respond to Jesus Christ.
- “It doesn’t earn much gratitude when I do good” – but God sends many blessings even to those who do not thank or appreciate Him.

5. (14-15) *More on how to deal with the disobedient.*

And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

a. **And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle:** Here, Paul finished the thought introduced at 2Th 3:6. He here elaborates on what it means to *withdraw* from a brother as mentioned previously.

b. **Note that person and do not keep company with him:** To *withdraw* means to **note that person**, and to **not keep company with him**, with the purpose of causing him to **be ashamed**. Yet, the purpose is not to make him an **enemy** of the church, but through the severity of the withdrawal from fellowship, to warn and **admonish** him as an erring **brother**.

i. “The intention of excommunication is not to drive men from the Lord’s flock, but rather to bring them back again when they have wandered and gone astray... Excommunication is to be distinguished from anathema.” (Calvin)

6. (16-18) *Conclusion to the letter.*

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord *be* with you all. The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

a. **Now may the Lord of peace:** Paul's blessing of **peace (always in every way)** was appropriate for this church experiencing both persecution and tribulation. It is the presence of the **Lord of peace** that will grant them this peace.

i. "I want to call particular attention to the apostle's words in this place. He does not say 'May the Lord of peace send his angel to give you peace.' It were a great mercy if he did, and we might be as glad as Jacob was at Mahanaim, when the angels of God met him. He does not even say, 'May the Lord of peace send his minister to give you peace.' If he did we might be as happy as Abraham when Melchizedec refreshed him with bread and wine. He does not even say, 'May the Lord of peace at the communion table, or in reading the word, or in prayer, or in some other sacred exercise give you peace.' In all these we might well be as refreshed ... but he says 'the Lord of peace himself give you peace,' as if he alone in his own person could give peace, and as if his presence were the sole means of such a divine peace as he desires." (Spurgeon)

b. **The salutation of Paul with my own hand:** As was his custom, Paul himself wrote the final words of the epistle with his own hand. This was both a personal demonstration of affection, and proof that the letter was authentic (**a sign in every epistle**).

c. **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all:** For Paul, God's **grace** was the beginning and the end of the Christian life. It was appropriate that this letter - and most - of his letters began and ended with a mention of **grace**.

i. "There is the addition of one little word in this final benediction as compared with its form in the first

Epistle. It is the word '*all*.' Thus the apostle takes those whom he had been rebuking and correcting, and so reveals the greatness of his heart and his love." (Morgan)

ii. "Thus he poureth out his affection, by prayer upon prayer for them. A sweet closing up!" (Trapp)